

Young adolescent females with anorexia nervosa



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Anorexia nervosa is one common type of eating disorders which means after having this problem the patient will lose at least 15% of her minimum normal weight (Bryant-Waugh, 2006). It is a serious problem all over the world, although this illness is not as prevalent as other problems regarding the number of patients. This paper studies the causes of anorexia nervosa occurred in adolescent females based on the perspective of commercial effect.

Introduction about the anorexia nervosa

First of all, there are between 8 and 13 anorexia cases per 100, 000 persons and the average popularity is 0. 5% when the individual is diagnosed with a strict criteria whether he or she has anorexia nervosa problem (Granek, 2007). Although the numbers are small, the incidence of this problem has been increasing these years (Agras, Barlow, Ghapin, Abel, & Leitenberg, 1974). Considering Hong Kong situation, there is a statistic showing that about 6, 855 people suffer from anorexia nervosa. Secondly, the adolescent females especially between the age of 13 to 19 are at high risk from anorexia nervosa. In the first place, 95% of those anorexia nervosa victims are females (Matlin, 2004). Then, from most of the research paper, anorexia nervosa usually starts at the age of 13 for young adolescent females and the condition largely affects them during the age of 16 to 20. Moreover, it suggests that the incidence rate is highest for females aged 15-19 years in recent researches (Van Hoeken, Seidell, & Hoek, 2003). As a result, this paper may target at the young adolescent females aged between 13 and 20 who have the risk to have anorexia nervosa or already have this problem.

The impact of anorexia nervosa

Although we find that the number of the cases all over the world is not as big as other sickness, it has a serious impact on the individuals. It will cause physical illness like weight loss, lack of nutrition, interruption of regular menstruation, stomach problems, faint, insomnia, extraversion (Semin, Rosch, & Chassein, 1981). Generally speaking, adolescents who have this problem will develop more slowly than their normal peers. Their Intelligence as well will be affected (Sternberg, Conway, Ketran, & Bernstein, 1981). Besides, the above symptoms also lead to other behavior problems like delinquency (Furnham & Henderson, 1983), drug use disorder such as alcohol (Sullivan, F. R. A. N. Z. C. P., Bulik, Fear, & Pickering, 1998), and homosexuality (Furnham & Taylor, 1990). Moreover, some psychological effects which also can be related to the cause of the problem reveal within the whole process which may last even for the whole life such as mood, anxiety and panic disorder and social phobia (Sullivan, et al., 1998). The most important thing is that it is quite possible that people who have anorexia nervosa when they are young will have a continuity of this problem into adulthood. Because of the depression and suffering, some patients even hurt themselves to relieve the pain from psychology. Some studies have suggested that another serious outcome for patients with anorexia nervosa is suicide (Pompili, Mancinelli, Girardi, Ruberto, & Tatarelli, 2003).

Considering the serious outcome and impact of anorexia nervosa, it is meaningful for the researchers to study the cause of this problem and eventually propose the possible solution according to the reason.

Cause analysis of anorexia nervosa on adolescent females

Until recently, there are many research papers about the reason why adolescent females have anorexia nervosa problem. It has been studied from different perspectives which consist of biological, psychological and sociocultural aspect and levels of analysis including individual, relational and societal factors(O'Shaughnessy & Dallos, 2009). Although there are many psychological analyses about anorexia nervosa of young females, the literatures have primarily adopted quantitative method to study the phenomena. So it is necessary for me to examine this topic with a qualitative way to know why the youth have anorexia nervosa problem. Also, commercial influence is a new and innovative perspective that relates to the anorexia nervosa. In Hong Kong or all over the world, the media has played an important role in leading people to choose the way they live, especially the commercials. As there are few researches about how commercials affect youth to see themselves and have an abnormal eating habit, I want to explain the relationship between these two aspects within a psychological perspective.

Sociocultural factors

Traditionally, Chinese culture appreciates for full figure, which represents wealth and healthy body, especially in Tang Dynasty. However, with the development of the society and the influence from western countries, the value gradually changes(LAI, 2000). Hong Kong, a special area which was colonized by United Kingdom for a long period of time, could be the first to assimilate the western ideas. We always can see the models from western countries who are skinny and some news were released to us that a few models were even sick or die from anorexia. Regarding gender stereotype, <https://assignbuster.com/young-adolescent-females-with-anorexia-nervosa/>

culture standard for man is strong, masculine, and tall while for women is gentle, slimmer and grace which is a pressure for women to be thinness. And gradually women are becoming more concerned about weight and shape during their socialization process. Besides, slimmer rather than obese figures are the personality traits desired by us(Harris, Harris, & Bochner, 1982). As a result females focus more on the figure and others' impression.

Commercial impact

Faust (1983) raised the point that the media takes an important role in maintaining societal views for female figures. Nowadays because of the value that I talked about above, many magazines showed quite a lot articles about the abnormal pattern of eating or dieting to teach female readers how to be thinner; television and radios advertise a lot about the product of losing weight like those showed in the bus or on the wall of the subway in Hong Kong. The advertisements always guarantee the effective outcome with the comparison of one girl who will be much thinner then before after using the product. Nowadays, the average person sees 500 more or less advertisements a day, 10% of which has a direct message about beauty. So how come will we not be affected by those commercials which are so widespread? The most important thing is that commercials' targets are mainly women and young because they are viewed as relatively irrational consumers. The advertisers just make use of the psychology of the female consumers and earn the profit brought by them. So here are the three major factors in the commercials that influence the females: frequently showing the thin beautiful models which may let us regard thin is beauty; increasing products and posters about losing weight which may remind us to care about

our figure and be dissatisfied with our own; choosing the celebrities who are admired by people to stimulate our desire to be like them.

Adolescent females' psychological analysis

Under the impact of the commercials, adolescent females gradually become crazy about their figure and thus the eating habit. First of all, Self-perception of body image is very important to this issue. Body image is the most important for adolescents as adolescence is the period for puberty. The adolescents who have cognitive distortions about the weight and food intake, body perception and figure will probably have anorexia nervosa problems. Secondly, when they see the commercials, they want themselves to be the one showed in it and ignore the real self. They just want to achieve the same body-shape without judging themselves objectively. It is a discrepancy between the perceived body and the desired ideal body(Ogden & Munday, 1996). There was a study asking adolescents to choose 3 types of the figures in the pictures which include the one you think is yourself, the one you want to be, and the one whom males will like the most. Funny finding is that most of the females regard themselves are fatter than the ideal one. According to social cognitive theories, adolescent females' expectancies are from the internal determinants and the environment. That is to say the values and the commercials which are external determinants co-work to affect the behavior. During the adolescent period, individual's self-efficacy beliefs influence many aspects of performance. They choose the activity like dieting to engage in and devote major effort to this behavior. Also, the adolescent will be persistent in pursuing the behavior and in return strengthen their emotional reactions during the process. That is why and the whole process that girls

want to have abnormal eating habits and gradually become anorexia nervosa victims.

Another explanation for the anorexia nervosa is from social learning theory. Internal cognitive processes have major impact on our behavior and so does the observation of others' behavior as well as the environment. As the adolescent have the mind that they are not thin enough to be seemed as beauty, and they observe the other girls' behavior and the situation in the whole society, they want to change themselves. As a result, they start to learn from the commercials and change their eating habit or even the whole life style.

With regard to social psychology, conformity is always an interesting explanation to the issue especially within a group. For the adolescent females, they always have their own peer groups which have an impact on the individual. When one or a few of them in the group choose to use the product in the commercial or talk about how to be skinny, others even those who do not believe that at first will also be influenced thus to behave the same way as others. Similarly, the belief of beauty equates thin will be adopted one by one when showed through the commercials. Some people may become mob in the supermarket or even in the street. Adolescents who already believe that they have the necessity to lose weight or have a diet face the high risk of anorexia nervosa.

Prevention suggestions

There have been many research papers and suggestions of working with families or carers of adolescents who already have anorexia nervosa, and as

a social worker it is really important to adopt all the possible and applicable sources to help the client with this illness especially regarding the serious impact on the client him or herself and the potential risk within the whole family. However, anorexia nervosa is one of the toughest problems to cure of all psychiatric disorders(Halmi et al., 2005). So it is hard for me to give a therapy for them in a practical way as I am just a freshman in this field. Moreover, because there are less documentary about the prevention program for the individual so I want to give my suggestions regarding the prevention for the young adolescents group which has a high risk to have this problem.

Firstly, we should be clear about the early warning signs including secret dieting, dissatisfaction after lose weight, make new plan after attaining the previous goals, excessive exercise and interruption of regular menstruation. After recognizing the symptoms mentioned above, what we can do to prevent those potential patients are mainly focused on their cognitive development especially the balanced way of viewing the real self and ideal self about their figure. Helping adolescents to change their distorted body image is our objective. So what I suggest is using emotional-focused theory(Dolhanty & Greenberg, 2009) which will help to move the distorted feeling of ' I am fat '. It is important to let them have the objective belief of self-worth and self-image. As a social worker, what we can do is let the adolescent notice the change and believe they can change instead of putting our own ideas on them. We will help them to find the real self and face themselves in a right way(Vandereycken, Depreitere, & Probst, 1987). Then, CBT therapy can be adopted to focus on their behavior problem. Let the girls

gradually eat and have a normal life. I think if we identify the adolescents who are at risk quickly and offer them help as soon as possible, there will be less patients suffering from anorexia nervosa.

However, there are some limitations of the prevention. First of all, we cannot find many 'potential' patients as they and their family members maybe neglect this problem or regard the early symptoms of the anorexia nervosa as normal. Secondly, while we help the individual about their psychological and behavioral problem, we find it difficult to reduce the influence of commercials especially to propose a healthy life style in the society. So in some level, we are passive. At last, we should give more attention to the individual within a family or peer environment.

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